

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 13-114—HB 6465

Children Committee

Human Services Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL THERAPY

SUMMARY: This act requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF), by January 1, 2014 and within available appropriations, to:

1. develop and implement training for certain DCF staff and mental health care providers on the (a) healing value of the human-animal bond for children, (b) value of therapy animals in dealing with traumatic situations, and (c) benefit of an animal-assisted therapy program and
2. consult with the Department of Agriculture commissioner to identify a coordinated volunteer canine crisis response team.

It also requires DCF, by July 1, 2014 and within available appropriations, to consult with the Governor's Prevention Partnership and the animal-assisted therapy community to develop a crisis response program using the response team to provide animal-assisted therapy to children and youths living with trauma and loss.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2013

VOLUNTEER CANINE RESPONSE TEAMS

These teams must (1) consist of various handlers and dogs who have been trained, evaluated, and registered by an animal-assisted activity organization to provide aid to people during and after traumatic events; (2) operate on a volunteer basis; and (3) be available to provide animal-assisted therapy within 24 hours of receiving notice to do so.

DEFINITIONS

The act defines:

1. "animal-assisted therapy" as goal-directed intervention in which animals are used as an integral part of the crisis response process to aid people who have experienced mental, physical, or emotional trauma;
2. "animal-assisted therapy community" as the local or regional entities capable of providing animal-assisted therapy to people within the state; and
3. "animal-assisted activity organization" as any entity involved in training, evaluating, and registering members of the animal-assisted therapy community.

OLR Tracking: KGD:JKL:VR:RO